S
352.078605
L24v
vol. 5
1976

Montana State Library
3 0864 1005 0646 1
STATE DOCUMENTS

VOTER '76 REVIEW

THE JOURNAL

a newsletter for local government study commissions

Vol. 5 Helena, Montana 59601 March 1976

CASCADE COUNTY PROPOSES COMMISSION-EXECUTIVE

Cascade County is in the process of completing a charter which provides for an elected county executive and an executive assistant. The charter would retain the sheriff as an elected official and would provide for an elected county attorney. All other elected officials would be eliminated from the charter government. There would be between five and seven elected county commissioners, some elected from districts and some elected at large.

Cascade County is the first of the counties to propose an elected county executive, except for the unification commission-executive proposal of Butte-Silver Bow. (See Chairman Marie Tierney's editorial on the commission-executive form on page 7).

STATE COMMISSION ON LOCAL GOVERNMENT WINTER WORKSHOPS
Workshops scheduled from 9:00 a.m. - 4:30 p.m.

1. PUBLIC INFORMATION: TAKING YOUR PROPOSAL TO THE VOTERS
   In Helena: Saturday, March 13, at the Colonial (Executive Conference Room)
   In Glendive: Saturday, March 20, at Dawson College

Please invite the chairperson of your public information task force or other citizens' group to the workshop.

LEWISTOWN PROPOSES COMMISSION-MANAGER

The Lewistown study commission published its tentative report on February 22nd; it asks that the citizens of Lewistown vote in June on the commission-manager form.

According to Chairperson Ethel Lelek, the commission in the Lewistown recommendation will be composed of seven part-time commissioners, nominated by district and elected at-large, with four year overlapping terms. A chairman elected from their own members will be mayor.

Three sub-options will be put before the voters: partisan or non-partisan elections; whether or not to include neighborhood councils; and self-government or general powers.

The study commission will be holding a public hearing on their tentative recommendations on March 25 or 26. Members are now in the process of lining up a city manager from a city similar in size to Lewistown to answer questions at the hearing. (TURN TO PAGE 2)

The preparation of this document was financed in part through a Comprehensive Planning Assistance Grant from the United States Department of Housing and Urban Development, under the provisions of Section 701 of the Housing Act of 1954, as amended.

LEWISTOWN.....

In December, the Lewistown News-Argus published the position papers of each member of the Lewistown commission. In those papers, commission member Dean Anderson characterized Lewistown as a "community on the brink of much greater growth and development":

> As Lewistown grows, it becomes quite apparent that an increase in quantity of services will follow. Therefore, it is most important that these services be provided with the greatest degree of efficiency....
>
> I believe the future of Lewistown will depend on quality experienced management. We cannot depend on, nor gamble our future on the possibility of inexperienced people in charge of the big business of local government. Politics will be important, but must be laid aside when it comes to selecting the best qualified to manage our city.

****

SANDERS COUNTY PROPOSES CHARTER, COMMISSION-MANAGER

The Sanders County study commission has decided to propose the Commission-Manager form as its alternative. The commission will begin writing a charter to incorporate provisions suited to the needs of the county. Under the plan, five county commissioners, each from an individual district, will be elected to serve part-time. The commissioners would be paid $2,500 per year.

MISSOULA CITY-COUNTY TO GO STRAIGHT FOR CONSOLIDATION

The joint Missoula city and county study commissions backed a consolidated city government proposal twelve to one. The vote reversed an earlier decision to write a charter for a new county government and then recommend disincorporation of the city; voters will now be presented with a proposal to bring the two present local governments together as one. Input from a series of public hearings greatly influenced the change. The decision to go straight for consolidation has received the editorial support of the Missoulian.

GRANITE HIGH SCHOOL STUDENTS PARTICIPATE IN VOTER REVIEW

Twenty-one students of the senior government class of Granite High School presented their findings on alternative forms of local government to the Granite County study commission. The class presented a "practical" and an "ideal" alternative form.

The "practical" alternative suggested was the county commissioner system with the addition of a county administrator hired by the commissioners. The commissioners and administrator would then hire on a merit system, the clerk of court, assessor and treasurer. Elected officials would be the justice of the peace, clerk and recorder, superintendent of schools, attorney and sheriff, with a city-county law enforcement consolidation. A charter would have to be written.

The "ideal" alternative suggested was the commission-manager form, with all officers hired by the manager with the exception of the sheriff who would be elected but would be under the manager's control.

-from The Philipsburg Mail, 2/12/76

VOTER REVIEW TENTATIVE REPORTS PRINTED

A number of study commissions have reached an important milestone in the Voter Review process: after over a year of hard work, they have submitted their tentative reports to public scrutiny as required by law. The Lewis and Clark County, Helena, Kalispell, Twin Bridges, Bozeman and Lewistown study commissions are among those which have made the report available to the citizens of their community. The report has been distributed as supplements to community newspapers, copies have been left in libraries, courthouses, and study commission offices, and community organizations have delivered them to homes.

Public hearings and a public education effort will now follow before the final report is printed and the vote is taken on study commission proposals.

The following editorial was written on February 11, 1976 by Larry Lowary, publisher of The Pioneer which serves Big Timber and Sweet Grass County. The editorial is a response to articles and tapes distributed by the Committee to Restore the Constitution; the purpose of their material is to discredit the Voter Review process as a conspiracy which "will overthrow the United States Constitution and erect a soviet-style dictatorship upon the ruins of the Republic." We thank Mr. Lowary for permission to print his article.

HERE & THERE

By LARRY LOWARY

Those of us who feel life is complicated enough have got to have pity for fellow Americans who go around looking for—and apparently in their own minds finding—subversion under every rock and around every corner.

Consider the weight they carry around their shoulders as they plod through life preaching a message of despair and doom. Theirs must be the most unhappy existance of all.

This past week we received two pieces of literature and a cassette tape from a fellow Montana editor who apparently is convinced there's some validity in the positions being peddled by at least one "super-American" organization. (We won't mention is name, because we believe he sincerely thought he was doing us a favor by mailing us the material.)

We didn't have the time, but as a courtesy we did listen to the nearly hour and a half long tape, and read through the four-page fine-print leaflet.

Shades of McCarthyism!

Only this time, the villain isn't "communism". (We're not sure, however, that the speaker wouldn't have gotten around to denouncing it had he had more time). This time the ogre is a concept called federal regionalism.

SPEARHEADING the drive against this new "monster" is the Colorado-based "Committee to Restore The Constitution, Inc." (Suite 990, Savings Building, Fort Collins, Colo. 80521).

It's not that we disagree with the groups on all counts—their arguments about certain aspects of big government are legitimate. (And even if we disagreed with everything they said, we think they have a right to express themselves).

But we can't buy their scare tactics, innuendos, and half-truths.

Among the material sent to us was a July-August, 1974, Bulletin distributed by the group, and a tape of speech by Archibald Roberts, (director of the committee) to a group in Illinois last year.

Both are filled with inflamatory rhetoric designed to get the reader-listener really psyched up about what's (supposedly) happening.

There are several suggestions of "subversion", (clearly a throw-back to the Communist plot to take over the world), comments about "revolutionaries" (perhaps in deference to the nation's bicentennial), charges of "misuse" and "fraud", plenty of references like "accomplices", "enemy", and "dictators." And there's that favorite to describe anything you don't agree with—"propaganda" ("fed" to us by none other than the "eastern establishment.")

OF PARTICULAR concern (in the committee's bulletin) is the state of Montana, and particularly the current citizen's review of government.

We suspect a majority of thinking Montanans wouldn't take lightly Roberts' insinuation that we're a bunch who can't think for ourselves.

That, in essence, is what he's saying as he discredits the process, suggesting (all along the way) that the review is designed to use local committee members as "pawns" for the monied dictators. "Little expertise is required to realize that successful candidates to these commissions, those permitted to win, will be persons approved by the Administration Clearing House, Chicago, or by one of its 26 agencies."

I'm sure Harold McLauchlan, Margaret Huffman, Ann Schilling, Maggi Buttrell, Ed Bergquist, and Jan Counter will be pleased to know that they were elected to their groups because they were considered worthy by a Chicago "clearing house."

Even more insulting to these study commission members is the suggestion that they are too dumb to know what's going on—that they will present to local voters a plan that's been given to them by some guy wearing a black hat.

Roberts' bulletin suggests that commission members "having little experience in government and none in the conspiracy of regionalism....will lastly, obediently sign their names to the prepared script...

"The pattern of conquest is now visible," the bulletin continues..."Local government Study Commissions are to be the means for transforming the multi-county districts into reality and thus usher in the 'Federal Regionalism Concept' by popular demand.

IN HIS speech, Roberts talks a lot about Montana...but clearly he doesn't know much about Montanans.

If he thinks voters of Sweet Grass (or Yellowstone, or Stillwater, or any of the other 53 counties in the state) are going to blindly accept an alternative form of government that will mean a loss of personal freedom for themselves, he's crazy. (Don't pull the issue of the 1972 Constitution out for discussion—the local government study elections will be decided on a city and county basis. Local citizens will have THE say in deciding what they want).

MOST DISTRESSING about all this double-talk is the reality that statistics can be made to say whatever anyone wants them to say.

During this Bicentennial Year, Americans SHOULD become more aware of their freedoms, their rights and their responsibilities. We should enter into discussions and debates about where we are and where we're going.

But none of these debates can be meaningful—and some will be downright misleading—if participants are going to go around half-cocked, spewing forth weighted material, questionable statistics, and half-truths.

Making an honest mistake is forgiveable—or at least it should be—but knowingly perpetuating a falsehood is not. We find it hard to believe that the Committee to Restore the Constitution is really trying to save America!

Notes from Study Commissions

1. The Culbertson study commission will be attending the February meeting of the Culbertson town council to debate the question of self-government versus general government powers.

2. The Powell County study commission will hold a workshop and no-host luncheon for Powell County elected officials on Saturday, March 20th. The purpose of the workshop is to inform county officials of alternatives the study commission is considering. Guest speaker at the workshop will be Edward Mares, Project Director of the Montana Association of Counties.

3. The Granite County study commission has been showing the Voter Reivew slide show to several local organizations with valuable question and answer periods following each session. The slide show will be shown to the Pocahontas Lodge on February 11th and to the PTO February 24th. Commission members said an effort is being made to contact each civic and religious group in the county requesting that they appoint a citizenship chairman whose purpose would be to follow the activities of the study commission and report back to their organizations.

4. The Billings study commission has extended an invitation to Billings high school students to submit a preamble of 100 words for the proposed city charter.

5. The Rosebud County study commission may write a charter with a "hybrid" commission-manager form. A charter would make it possible to retain the election of the sheriff, county attorney, clerk and recorder, treasurer and assessor. The offices of county superintendent of schools, county coroner, public administrator, auditor and surveyor would be appointed. According to commission member william Gillin, the county manager may be best likened to a business administrator. "If a manager can save the county one percent of its budget, a $25,000 a year manager will more than pay for himself," Gillin said.

6. The White Sulphur Springs study commission is thinking about proposing the commission-chairman form. The commission also discussed the possibility of combining city and county law enforcement and consolidation of city and county road and street maintenance.

7. The Dawson County study commission, says Chairman Russell McDonough, is tentatively thinking of proposing five part-time commissioners with a hired or elected executive. The study commission might also recommend the elimination of the offices of county coroner and surveyor.

8. The Libby study commission met with the city manager of Vancouver, Washington on February 16th to discuss the role of the manager.

9. The Lewis and Clark County study commission reports that a citizen's task force has been organized to help promote passage of the proposed commission-manager form of government.

10. The Shelby and Toole County local government study commissions jointly circulated a questionnaire on law enforcement in Toole County. Results included a wide acceptance of the idea of unification of law enforcement agencies.

11. A group of women from Manhattan, under Extension Homemakers, is studying three books of town ordinances to make recommendations to the town council. Some of the laws in the books reportedly date back to 1911.

DECISIONS: VOTER REVIEW 76

This column, which will appear monthly, lists decisions made thus far by study commissions on alternative forms. These decisions may be modified by public input before the final report is written.

WIBAUX: disincorporation / WIBAUX COUNTY: commission-chairman / TOOLE COUNTY: commission / EAST HELENA: commission-executive, self-government powers / CASCADE COUNTY: charter, commission-executive / FLATHEAD COUNTY: commission-manager / SANDERS COUNTY: charter, commission-manager / LEWISTOWN: commission-manager, self-government powers / BRIDGER: charter, commission-executive / GLASGOW: commission-executive, self-government powers / CLYDE PARK: commission-executive, self-government powers / SIDNEY: commission-executive, self-government powers / FERGUS COUNTY: charter, commission-manager / RED LODGE: commission-executive, self-government powers / TOWNSEND: commission-manager / COLUMBIA FALLS: disincorporation / PRAIRIE COUNTY: commission-chairman / TWIN BRIDGES: commission-executive / HILL COUNTY: commission-manager / HAVRE: commission-manager, self-government powers / MILES CITY: charter, commission-manager, non-partisan elections / KALISPELL: commission-manager / WHEATLAND COUNTY: charter, manager / BILLINGS: charter, city administrator / YELLOWSTONE COUNTY: charter, county administrator / ANACONDA-DEER LODGE COUNTY: unification, charter, commission-manager, partisan elections / LEWIS and CLARK COUNTY: charter, commission-manager / HELENA: charter, commission-manager / BOZEMAN: commission-manager, self-government powers, election of mayor / MISSOULA-MISSOULA COUNTY: unification, charter, county administrator / BUTTE-SILVER BOW COUNTY: unification, charter, commission-executive / WHITEFISH: charter, manager / MANHATTAN: town meeting / TERRY: charter, town meeting.

REMEMBER: STUDY COMMISSIONS MUST HAVE TENTATIVE REPORTS DRAFTED, ADOPTED AND PRINTED BY JUNE 1, 1976

THE FINAL REPORT MUST BE ADOPTED BY AUGUST 1, 1976; THE FINAL REPORT PRINTED AND DISTRIBUTED BY OCTOBER 3, 1976

If your study commission has made a decision we don't know about, write Arnold Malina, State Commission on Local Government, Capitol Station, Helena, Montana 59601. Phone 449-2814. Articles on your study commission also will be appreciated.

CLERK EXPLAINS HIS RESIGNATION

Howard Ellis, who submitted his resignation last week as Carbon County clerk and recorder, said this week that his reasons are about 25% personal and 75% official.

Indicating his general disillusionment with county government practices, he said he's trying to write it down in the form of an open letter. The composition, which he plans to make available when it's finished, will contain three major segments covering "every area of county government that's supported by tax money," he said.

Without going into specifics, because that would fill a book, Mr. Ellis said the days are past when county government can be run effectively by men elected mainly to serve as road foremen. The growing complexities of county government and the need for ever-tighter fiscal responsibility takes special kinds of talent and probably a different kind of county government altogether, he said.

-from the Carbon County News, 1/29/76

MODIFYING THE PRESENT FORM

Many study commissioners in their review have found that they are more or less satisfied with their existing local government form; yet they also feel they can improve the present form with modifications. Under Voter Review, study commissions can recommend, among others, the following changes:

1. self-government powers;
2. various options regarding elected county officials (e.g., appointment, selected as provided by ordinance, not to be included as a separate office);
3. at-large elections;
4. mayor to prepare budget;
5. mayor to appoint all employees and department heads;
6. partisan or non-partisan elections;
7. administrative assistant to mayor (commission);
8. appointed treasurer
9. eliminate vote of mayor on council;
10. eliminate veto power of mayor;
11. require community councils;
12. change size of commission.

A list of study commissions which have thus far proposed modifications in the present form follows:

The East Helena study commission, according to Chairman Barbara Mizner, has proposed retaining the commission-executive form with self-government powers and a number of other modifications. Mizner feels that self-government powers "very definitely will improve our town government. We would have greater local control and flexibility, and most important, a greater sense of responsibility in dealing with our local problems." The commission is also recommending non-partisan elections; a five member commission, two each from two wards and one elected at-large, with overlapping terms of office; and a number of moderately strong options for the mayor. The voters will be given the option of electing or appointing a treasurer.

The Glasgow study commission, reports Chairman Ike Knudsen, has proposed the commission-executive form with self-government powers and an appointed treasurer. The Glasgow commission sponsored a debate on self-government and general powers last month; over 70 persons attended. The commission has decided upon a June election.

The Red Lodge study commission has publicly announced the following modifications of the commission-executive form to be presented to the voters. According to Chairman Bayard Nearpass, the commission has recommended self-government powers, an administrative assistant for the mayor, two year term of office for all elected and appointed officials, non-partisan elections, and the at-large election of the city council.

The Toole County study commission, according to Chairman Dean Hellinger, has decided to retain the commission form, with the following modifications: non-partisan elections and the elimination of the elective offices of superintendent of schools and public administrator.

Both the Sidney and Malta study commissions will retain the commission-executive form with self-government powers and other modifications.

A number of other study commissions have publicly expressed their satisfaction with the present form, though they have not publicly announced their tentative recommendations. The Cut Bank and Liberty County study commissions have both come to the conclusion that they will not recommend any major changes because local citizens seem to be happy with what they have. Ford Hughes, Chairman of the Cut Bank commission, said of the town's commission-executive form: "I think we've got a pretty good system the way it is. Everybody seems to like it." The commission discussed their government with the mayor, representatives of the city council,

(TURN TO NEXT PAGE)

police and fire departments, the city clerk and treasurer and other city officials. Those discussions brought almost no complaints about how city and government functions, Hughes said.

Liberty County Chairman Con Murphy said that the commission will probably recommend three sub-options which members feel would improve the present system. The commission is considering, among others, the elimination of the position of county superintendent of schools, and the election of five county commissioners instead of three.

The Big Timber study commission is also satisfied with its commission-executive form, but, according to Chairman Ed Berquist, they have decided to write a charter to provide more local flexibility to the form. Commission member Margaret Buttrell said that the commission has not yet begun writing the charter, but she would like a provision prohibiting a member of the city council from also serving on boards.

****

"The State Commission expects us to read another one of their bulletins!! Ha!"
(sketch courtesy of the Harlowton Times; submitted by Blanche Blum, Wheatland County)

****

The following editorial is a position paper on the commission-executive form written by Marie Tierney, Chairman, Cascade County study commission. Study Commissioners are encouraged to respond to this article, and/or submit "position papers" on topics of their own choice for Voter Review Journal publication.

ON THE COMMISSION-EXECUTIVE FORM FOR CASCADE COUNTY

By Marie Tierney

The Cascade County local government study commission has voted as their tentative proposal to write a charter with the structure of the commission-executive form of government. After careful consideration of the need for centralized management, checks and balances in the political process, and the fact that the new legislation which created in the present form a total lack of such checks and balances, effective May 2, 1977, we have decided that what we can have in Cascade County is an alternative which still allows the voter his constitutional right to elect his legislative and executive heads of government while incorporating into the charter a system which allows for centralized administrative and fiscal management.

We seriously considered the commission-manager form of government. After having heard testimony from both the Great Falls city manager, Dick Thomas, and the consultant Tom Fletcher from Arthur D. Little and Company, we decided that based upon their statement that lack of political leadership is the single greatest flaw in the commission-manager system, we would have an elected executive rather than an appointed one.

(TURN TO NEXT PAGE)

CASCADE COUNTY....

We are eliminating all elected offices with the exception of the county attorney and the sheriff. The elimination of these offices has been carefully considered over the past 15 months. We feel that centralized management is impossible when the administration is fragmented through 15 separately elected officials only five of which at the present time, the three county commissioners, the sheriff and the county attorney, have any real decision-making powers. The commission form of county government as it presently exists cannot be given self-determination through self-government powers because there is no checks and balance system. To write a charter just to accommodate that particular item would be hypocritical and would not solve the political consideration necessary in consolidating county offices and centralizing the government. It would create a totally untenable and unrealistic political position for partisan elected officials in their local counties. It is necessary for the study commissions to play the "heavy" in this venture and give the county commissioners the leverage and the exposure in the public view to eliminate these offices should the proposal fail.

In Cascade County, our county commissioners and elected officials have done their duty honorably and well. It is the structure itself which has caused them their problems. They are prohibited and inhibited by state law in attempting to overhaul their system because of the nature of the system itself. The county commissioners at present cannot exercise any power not specifically granted to them by state law. In order for them to exercise the powers that everyone believes they have, the study commission must give them a form which allows them this policy-making initiative.

Our study commission has had alot of headaches, sleepless nights, and continuing healthy dissension. We have determined that it would be a great waste of public money not to try to find a legitimate alternative to the present form. We intend to offer to the voters the present form which in our county has been well-managed and which is solvent, and to offer what we feel is a legitimate alternative. The voters will make their own decision. The importance of the review process is not which form the voter chooses but that all voters make a choice.

VOTER REVIEW

State Commission on Local Government
State Capitol
Helena, MT 59601

Bulk Rate
U.S. Postage
PAID
Permit No. 133
Helena, MT
59601